

Department of Genetics  
University of Wisconsin  
Madison 6, Wisconsin

February 11, 1952

Dear Mr. Loutit:

Your letter of the 30th Jan. has just been received. As the letterhead shows, airmail service is not a little faster than the 3-month schedule for surface mail.

I am pleased to hear that you have undertaken recombination tests with your mutants, even if they were unrewarding. I had a similar experience with my mutants of *Pseudomonas fluorescens*. On a long chance, it might sometime be worthwhile combining the two sets of cultures. Meanwhile, we are finally gaining some insights into the determination of fertility in *E. coli*. About 35 distinct fertile strains have now been isolated, in addition to the original K-12. A parallel program with *Salmonella* has given a surprising result: there is a recombination mechanism, but it is not sexual. Instead, filtrable particles mediate the "transduction" of individual differential traits from one strain to another, something along the lines of the pneumococcus transformation. It is certainly worthwhile to continue looking at other bacteria for their genetic properties.

I would sympathize somewhat more acutely with your isolation if it were not for the recent recruitment of Professor Catchside to the Botany Department of your University. I do not know whether he has yet arrived; please give him my best regards if you should chance to see him. Of course, your hopes of some postdoctoral travel should be encouraged nonetheless.

Your inquiry about an assistantship did not provide enough information for me to give a full answer. In particular, I would like to know just when you planned to complete your work, and how long you wanted to stay. I suspect the word "assistantship" has a different connotation in American and in Antipodal usage. If you mean an appointment commensurate with your professional training (i.e. a postdoctoral), I regret that I must tell you that the University of Wisconsin could not subsidize it. Stipends have been provided for graduate students, but it would be difficult to justify their application to a postdoctoral fellow whose stay in the laboratory was motivated by his own immediate needs. I hope this does not sound too severe; I merely wish to point out that you can and should look to other sources.

I am not acquainted with the current status of the program, but have you considered looking for a Fulbright Act Exchange Fellowship. Some of our people have gone to New Zealand under these auspices, and the program is reciprocal. Unfortunately, the passage of this hurdle would expose another: we are in an execrably crowded condition. There is, however, some prospect of relief for our space needs by early next year, so this discussion is not entirely pointless. If you would like to follow this up, please send me a more detailed exposition of your plans, followed by the usual records of academic achievement. Your application need not be submitted formally until after preliminary discussion.

Yours sincerely,

Joshua Lederberg,  
Associate Professor of  
Genetics